

**Sunday November 13, 2016
New Jerusalem
Revelation 21:9-27 (NIV)**

⁹ One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

¹¹ It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

¹² It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹³ There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.

¹⁴ The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.

¹⁶ The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.

¹⁷ The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick.

¹⁸ The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.

¹⁹ The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,

²⁰ the fifth onyx, the sixth ruby, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth turquoise, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

²¹ The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²² I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

²³ The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

²⁵ On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Good Morning My Sisters and Brothers in Christ! On Wednesday, the morning after the election, I was angry. No, not at the outcome, I was angry with me. For like many of us I did not do all that I could have done to support the candidate of my choice. Yes, I posted a few items on Face Book. Yes, I made a financial contribution. Yes, I even prayed! But I failed to see the America that I live in and instead looked at America as I wished it to be.

I believed that women would go to the polls in record numbers to defeat a candidate that reduced us to sexual objects. I believed that men who were raised by women would work to defeat a candidate that demeaned their grandmothers, mothers, sisters and daughters. I believed that people of color, wherever they were would vote against a candidate that stood against everything that the Statute of Liberty stands for:

"...Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,"¹

But on Wednesday morning I realized that the America I wished for and prayed for had not yet arrived.

As I have read the blogs of those with more degrees, more experience as pastors, and more eloquent prose I was struck by their messages of hope; their calls for unity; and their fervent declaration that this is not the end but just another beginning. I found myself thinking about the words we heard from Rev. Doug Harris last Sunday. He reminded us that whatever the outcome of the election, God is still God.

All of the reading and research and reflecting that I began on Wednesday was supposed to help me arrive at a message for you, the people of First Baptist of Park Forest. Yet my thoughts remained scattered and unclear so I went to bed on Saturday still without a sermon. So this morning, I began again.

Our passage under consideration is a continuation from last Sunday. We are still looking at Revelation 21 and John's vision of a new heaven and a new earth. I want you to keep in mind that what John saw, could **only** be recorded in the language that John had

¹ <http://www.ladytorch.com/statue-of-liberty-poem.html>

available to him. Therefore, in order to get a 21st century application for this lesson we need to move from considering it literally, but rather as metaphor. With that as introduction pray with me and for me as I talk about

WHAT'S NEXT!

SHALL WE PRAY?

God of heaven and earth, God who has promised never to leave us or forsake us, God, who has promised a new heaven and a new earth we your people come this morning in need of a Word from you. A Word that strengths us for the journey. A Word that helps us to get our heads out of the sand and our feet out of the mud. Send your Spirit to be with us. Let us see our roles and responsibilities in WHAT'S NEXT! In the wonderful name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen.

WHAT'S NEXT!

The answer to **WHAT'S NEXT!** depends on where **you wish to stand** as you continue this Christian journey.

- You can choose to stand with those who wish to demonstrate after the fact;
- You can stand with those who are planning to leave the country;
- You can stand with those who believe it was just political talk and the President-elect does not really mean to
 - build a wall on the Mexican border;
 - reverse Obama care;
 - or loosen gun control.

I cannot tell you where to stand,

- for just as your right to vote or not vote,
- your right to be knowable about the political issues and process or not,
- your right to care about what happens to those outside of your circle is a private matter.

Where you choose to stand for the next four years can also be viewed as a private matter.

Yet everything I believe about being a Christian teaches me to believe that **I must stand, boldly, openly, knowledgeable for things I hold to be true.** Both Malcolm and Martin told us that failure to stand for something would leave us open to fall for anything.

Let me provide a couple of recent examples of what I mean.

Jamie: Mexicans play soccer better than us

Mary: Going to go write in Obama

Lois: Learn to lie, better

So **WHAT'S NEXT!**

The answer depends on **your endgame.** Where do you wish to spend eternity? **The leaders in this country have the potential to**

- change their party affiliation;
- change with elections;
- change because of bad decisions they make;
- change because of illness, injury and/or death
- change what they said during the campaign after the election

The leaders in this country can concern themselves with the well-being of

- the rich and famous
- those who look, act and think like them
- those who are
 - locked up, in prison, in poverty, personal circumstances
 - locked out,
 - of good safe housing,
 - of equal pay for equal work
 - of educational opportunities
 - locked in, by fear, frustration, failure

But the leader I am most concerned with and about

- Does not change –
 - **Malachi 3:6**
 - I the Lord do not change

- Does not lie
 - **Numbers 23:19**
 - **God** is **not** human, that he should **lie**, **not** a human being, that he should change his mind. **Does** he speak and then **not** act? **Does** he promise and **not** fulfill?
 - **Titus 1:2**
 - in the hope of eternal life, which **God**, who **does not lie**, promised before the beginning of time,

- Does not spin the message as He moves
 - from church to temple
 - to store front
 - to street corners to our own secret closets.
 - Hebrews 13:7-8
 - ⁷Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

If your endgame is heaven you need to pay close attention to what God told John about who would be in heaven:

**²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it,
nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful,
but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

WHAT'S NEXT!

The Greatest Command still stands

Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV)

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'^[a] ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'^[a]

The Great Commission is still our job

¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

I suggest to you a way to begin:

- You need a mentor – someone further along the journey than you.
- You need a fellow traveler – someone to journey with
- You need a mentee – someone in whom to impart your experiences and spiritual insight ²

WHAT'S NEXT?

Depends as much on you as it does our President elect and those who support him.

AMEN

² http://www.sermoncentral.com/print_friendly.asp?SermonID=164955